ULI Land Use Policy Forum Report

Corporate Location and Smart Growth

Prepared by
Anne Frej

Washington, D.C.
April 8–9, 2002

Urban Land
Institute

About ULI

ULI–the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit education and research institute that is supported by its members. Its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

ULI sponsors education programs and forums to encourage an open, international exchange of ideas and sharing of experience; initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development. Established in 1936, the Institute today has more that 17,000 members and associates from more than 60 countries representing the entire spectrum of land use and development disciplines.

Richard M. Rosan
President

ULI Land Use Policy Forum Reports. ULI is in the forefront of national discussion and debate on the leading land use policy issues of the day. To encourage and enrich that dialogue, ULI holds land use policy forums at which leading experts gather to discuss topics of interest to the land use and real estate community. The findings of these forums serve to guide and enhance ULI's program of work. ULI produces summaries of these forums in its Land Use Policy Forum Reports series, available on the ULI Web site, www.uli.org. By holding these forums and publishing summaries of the discussion, the Institute hopes to increase the body of knowledge that contributes to the quality of land use policy and real estate development practice throughout the country.

Acknowledgments

ULI gratefully acknowledges the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Bank of America for their sponsorship of the forum.

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ULI Catalog Number: 669

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Introduction

In April 2002, ULI–the Urban Land Institute convened a panel of 37 experts in Washington, D.C., to discuss the topic "Corporate Location and Smart Growth." The purpose of the forum was to stimulate a dialogue on the question of how the real estate needs of companies can be met in settings that are consistent with smart growth principles.

Participants included a diverse group of professionals from the real estate industry including developers, real estate advisers, land use planning practitioners, architects, and representatives from major corporations. They considered the following questions:

- What are the trends in office development and corporate location?
- What key factors drive decisions on corporate location?
- What makes a place attractive for business?
- Why is it important to consider the principles of smart growth in the corporate location process?
- Do communities that protect and enhance quality of life become magnets for economic growth?
- What solutions can help create livable workplaces?

Policy Forum Summary

The forum began with a welcome from Richard M. Rosan, ULI president, followed by opening remarks from the forum chair, William F. McCall, Jr., president of the McCall & Almy, Inc., real estate advisory firm. A series of sessions on aspects of corporate location and presentations of case studies led to an exchange of views by forum participants. The program concluded with a moderated discussion of ideas that emerged during the forum and a summary of the factors working for and against consideration of smart growth in the corporate location decision-making process.

Emerging Trends in Corporate Location

Three experts in the field provided an overview of emerging trends in corporate location throughout the country.

Robert E. Lang, director of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), set the stage for the day with a presentation titled "The Evolving Geography of Business Location." Based on an analysis of the location of office space in 13 of the nation's largest commercial real estate markets between 1979 and 1999, Lang found that commercial office space no longer is found just within a few high-density clusters, such as downtowns or secondary downtowns. In the past two decades, there has been increasing growth in edge cities and "edgeless cities."

Edge cities, which typically contain about 5 million square feet of office space, begin with a highway interchange, followed by office, retail, and residential development that spreads outward in a low-density pattern. Edge cities are worthwhile investment targets, but they are difficult to retrofit as smart growth locations because they are often landlocked, have inflexible streets systems that do not easily accommodate additional development, and have a limited public transit system or no public transit. Also, neighborhood objections often limit the ability of developers to add taller and denser development to these areas.

Edgeless cities, which are located farther from the city center, are much more highly dispersed clusters of office space that can extend over tens, if not hundreds, of square miles of space. There was steady growth of this type of development in the 1980s and 1990s, and the amount of office space in edgeless cities is now double that of edge cities. While some offices may be located near residential areas, chances are that residents do not necessarily work in the adjacent offices. As Lang noted, employees increasingly commute from dispersed location to dispersed location. Jobs and housing can be located near each other, but many people do not work in places near their home if better employment opportunities can be found elsewhere.

Dan Malachuk, worldwide director, business location services, for Andersen, provided an overview of the factors that companies consider when selecting a business location in his presentation, "What Are Companies Really Looking For?" He noted that the search for "knowledge capital" is key in business decisions about where to invest and grow. For this reason, both businesses and communities need to understand the factors that contribute to quality of life and attract workers. This is even more important today for communities as they face global competition from lower-cost places around the world for businesses planning to relocate.

Talent and quality of life are key factors companies weigh when deciding where to locate their headquarters and research and development (R&D) facilities, because they prefer places where they can find a pool of educated workers or can attract workers from existing corporations. According to Malachuk, places that attract talented workers are those that offer opportunities for two-career households, convenient commute times, housing value, and an environment that welcomes diversity. Alternatively, the main factor driving corporate decisions on the location of call centers and labor-intensive production facilities is lower costs.

Maluchuk noted that companies are increasingly mobile, but once they make a location decision, they are "locked in"; therefore, it is important for cities, counties, and states to attract businesses by marketing themselves correctly. He challenged forum participants to consider whether smart growth is the right branding approach to lure businesses.

Ronald Ruberg, partner, Location Services Associates, agreed that labor is a critical factor in location decisions. There are labor shortages across the entire skill spectrum in the United States, and if the September 11, 2001 attacks affect immigration laws and practices, the situation will get worse. Other trends include a continued focus on location costs and a shortening of the decision cycle, which place a premium on the availability of infrastructure, the length of the permitting process, and the availability of information on buildings and sites. Incentives have also become more important and are now used as an initial screening factor by some companies in the selection process. He agreed with Malachuk that quality-of-life issues are becoming increasingly important for high-tech companies. Because corporations are now looking far beyond U.S. borders for potential sites for their headquarters and facilities, U.S. cities will have to work harder to compete.

The discussion following the presentations on corporate location trends spotlighted some of the major factors corporations consider when deciding where to locate.

Peter Brooks of Ernst & Young Real Estate Group noted that incentives were a key factor in Boeing's decision to select Chicago for its new headquarters after it had decided to leave Seattle. Other important factors for Boeing included quality of life, housing, and schools. According to Gail Lopez of Compuware Corporation, her company's decision to locate its headquarters in downtown Detroit was based on its commitment to the city. While the company recognized the financial advantages of locating in the suburbs, it also believed that in the long run it could generate more business in a downtown location.

Matthew Pearson of Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. suggested telecommuting as a possible solution to traffic congestion. Participants noted that the virtual workplace appears unlikely to replace completely the commute to the office, although it can reduce the total number of household trips. Telecommuting appears to provide greater benefit to households that choose to live farther from urban centers.

According to Richard Gilbert of BellSouth Corporation, in order for telecommuting to work, especially for technology workers, the worker must have sufficient bandwidth serving his or her home. Harriet Tregoning of the Maryland Governor's Office of Smart Growth cited a trend of employees living in Baltimore and telecommuting to Washington, D.C.

Several participants noted the irony of the current American lifestyle in which people dedicate considerable resources to their homes, but spend most of their time in the office.

Pearson explained Charles Schwab's decision to locate in Austin, Texas. Enjoying rapid growth and expansion, the company began to examine potential locations well in advance of the expected move, putting emphasis on quality of life and the ability to hire new employees quickly. He noted that locations with high quality of life have the ability to attract employees from other cities. Participants noted that other factors that attract companies are a range of housing types and transportation alternatives.

It was agreed that the tight labor market of recent years has led to the increased importance of quality-of-life issues, and although the cost of corporate real estate has risen, its share of overall company costs is minimal compared with personnel costs.

In summary, business trends may be pushing companies toward smart growth solutions. Participants said the fact that greenfield development is becoming more difficult, due to growth restrictions and not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) attitudes, may also be pushing companies toward more central and compact locations. Kenneth Rudy of Jones Lang LaSalle noted that companies located in edge cities often find they have few exit strategy alternatives if they wish to sell or sublease their office space.

What Is Meant by Smart Growth—A Brief Overview

At its core, smart growth is about ensuring that neighborhoods, towns, and regions accommodate growth in ways that are ecnomically sound, environmentally responsible, and supportive of community livability—growth that enhances the quality of life.

Robert Pinkard, CEO and managing director of the Cassidy & Pinkard real estate brokerage and services firm, further defined smart growth as "intelligent planning and matching land use with transportation infrastructure." He emphasized that smart growth is not an option; its principles must be adopted, whether or not people want to, due to population growth and the fact that resources such as water, land, electricity, roads, and clean air are limited. Some of the factors that corporations should consider when choosing a location include transportation options, a mix of uses at the new location, and the availability of affordable housing. The Clean Air Act will have a major impact on development, and in the future it will be necessary to pay more attention to whether a community is in compliance with environmental law before it is selected as the location for a corporate facility.

Pinkard described the Smart Growth Alliance (SGA) in Washington, D.C., as a model organization dealing with smart growth issues. The organization, created in 2000 through the initiative of ULI, today is made up of five members—ULI Washington, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and the Metropolitan Washington Builders' Council. The SGA is supported by an advisory group of representatives from universities, local governments, businesses, foundations, and civic groups from around the region. The organization is currently is working on four main projects—the Smart Growth Recognition Program to highlight development proposals using smart growth principles, a scan of best practices in the region, a state-of-the-region report that will be updated every two years, and a program to recognize conservation and open-space preservation efforts.

Corporate Location and Smart Growth in Atlanta

A case study was presented on smart growth activities put in place by both the public and private sectors in Atlanta. Thomas Weyandt, Jr., director of the Department of Comprehensive Planning at the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), provided an overview of the ARC's techniques for promoting development in designated areas. Weyandt noted that rather than using the term "smart growth," each organization and community the ARC works with in the region defines its own activities and programs.

The ARC's policies focus on reinforcing Atlanta's central business district and other city and town centers in the region, strengthening the existing urban fabric, and encouraging development of activity centers with a mix of uses, including housing. To assist in implementing these policies, the ARC uses broad-based education, as well as tools such as incentives. Specific incentive programs include:

- **The Georgia Quality Growth Partnership.** This organization is a collaboration of more than 30 public and private entities that work together to facilitate implementation of quality growth approaches by local governments. (See www.georgiaqualitygrowth.com for more information.)

- **Livable Centers Initiative (LCI).** This program provides incentives to communities to help them meet the objectives of the regional transportation plan. Over five years, $1 million dollars of seed money is to be awarded annually on a competitive basis to communities that develop plans that enhance livability and mobility for their residents. Through April 2002, three rounds of awards have been granted, and 32 communities have been engaged in the process. The LCI concept is beginning to be considered as a framework for other types of organizations. (See www.atlantaregional.com for more information.)

Richard Gilbert, director of BellSouth's Metro Plan, described the company's plan to centralize employee work groups at three locations in Atlanta. From 25 office locations throughout the city, BellSouth is consolidating into three new business centers. The company considered 50 sites around Atlanta, but settled on three in the northern half of the city that would be nearest the geographic center of employee residences. Each of the potential locations was rated on employee demographics, transportation choices, accessibility to other BellSouth sites, site size, infrastructure, crime, environmental impacts, and surrounding amenities. With transportation options recognized as a key factor in the decision-making process, the company decided to locate several offices at or near mass transit stations. The company rejected the concept of a corporate campus because it did not provide the flexibility needed for future growth.

The three sites selected by BellSouth are:

■ Lenox Park—a location surrounded by low-density single- and multifamily residential developments, with access to the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) public transit system provided by shuttle bus;

■ Lindbergh City Center—a location surrounded by commercial and residential uses, with direct access to public transit; and

■ Midtown Center—an urban site adjacent to a MARTA station.

BellSouth surveyed employees to determine if they would use public transit if parking were provided at transit stations, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Not all employees have access to public transit, however, so the company had to balance public transit with the provision of parking on site. To encourage transit use, designated BellSouth parking facilities are being constructed at four MARTA stations to provide free and secure parking. Services and retail amenities for employees will be added to the garages in the future.

To further encourage use of transit by employees and discourage automobile use, the amount of on-site parking at the three office sites is lower than required by local zoning laws. This required a zoning variance at the Lenox Park site to reduce the parking ratio from four spaces per 1,000 square feet of office space to 3.5 spaces. At the Lindbergh City Center and Midtown Center sites, which are in a different county than Lenox Park, the lower parking ratios of 2.34 and 1.8 spaces per 1,000 square feet of office space, respectively, were encouraged by the local government as a way of limiting car trips to these office centers.

Gilbert noted that the design of the three office locations took exit strategies into consideration. All the buildings have identical floorplates of 30,000 square feet that can be subdivided for other users. BellSouth owns all the buildings; tax abatement bonds were used in financing their construction.

Gannett Co./*USA Today* Corporate Relocation

Nancy Houser, director of corporate administration at Gannett Co., Inc., detailed the company's site selection process for a new headquarters complex for Gannett and its flagship national newspaper, U*SA Today*. The company decided to move from its previous headquarters in Rosslyn, Virginia, because it wanted to own rather than lease space and because small floorplates at the previous site created too much vertical separation between departments. The requirements for the new location included a prominent location, an upscale setting with hotels and amenities in the immediate area, a site of about 20 acres with space for at least 600,000 square feet of office space, and accessibility to current employees.

The company began its search for a new site in 1993. A list of 51 sites originally considered was narrowed down to five sites in Maryland and Virginia; the District of Columbia was not considered due to an unfavorable political situation there at that time. The top four executives of Gannett selected a 25-acre site in McLean, Virginia, where currently 1,750 people work in buildings that encompass 820,000 square feet of office space.

Michael Greene of the Kohn Pederson Fox Associates architecture firm described the building site plan and the design of the new headquarters. He noted that the site can be characterized as being located on the edge of an edge city, which led to the challenge of creating a sense of community for the facility. Gannett and *USA Today* are housed in towers that sit on a shared podium base that includes an exterior town square. The design orients the complex toward a five-acre stormwater management pond.

Because Gannett emphasized creation of a high-quality work environment that could help attract the best employees, there are a variety of employee amenities on site, including free parking, a health club, two basketball courts, tennis courts, a jogging trail, a softball diamond, restaurants, a bank, a credit union, and a convenience store. The site is served by a local bus that runs in front of the building every 15 minutes and by a shuttle bus that connects to the nearest Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) rail station. Houser noted that Metro plans to extend service to the nearby Tysons Corner area, but the schedule for construction is uncertain.

In a follow-up discussion, Patty Noonan of the nonprofit New York City Partnership described how her organization is working to help New York City do a better job of retaining companies, particularly after the September 11 attacks. The organization has convened a task force of "location makers" and has identified areas where growth should be targeted, including Long Island City, Harlem, downtown Brooklyn, and far west Midtown Manhattan. She said her organization's work indicates that companies focus less on incentives and more on available infrastructure in deciding where to locate.

Hank Baker of Forest City Stapleton, Inc., in Denver described the Stapleton Airport development project that his company is undertaking and the smart growth concepts it plans to put into practice there. The 7.5-square-mile site, located just ten minutes from downtown Denver, is designated for 12,000 to 15,000 houses at a relatively high density of 10 units per acre, 10 million square feet of office space, and 3 million square feet of retail space. The company is paying considerable attention to sustainability and environmental concerns, he said. A range of housing choices will be available, and it is expected that 20 percent of the homes will be available as affordable housing.

Perspectives on Corporate Location Decision Making

The last session provided three different views on corporate location decision-making and how it relates to smart growth and community concerns.

Norman Carter, manager, economic development, at Potomac Electric and Power Company (Pepco), started the session by discussing Pepco's decision to keep its corporate headquarters in downtown Washington, D.C. Pepco, a public utility company that serves 710,000 customers in the District of Columbia and suburban Maryland, had no intention of moving from its central Washington location, until several years ago when it lost its office space to the World Bank. That gave the company two and a half years to decide whether to move outside the District and whether to rent or buy its new building. It considered relocating to suburban Maryland, where it owned land and where it potentially could enjoy lower operating costs. A survey of Pepco employees showed a 50/50 split on where to move: administrative staff wanted to move to the suburbs, and the technical and professional staff preferred a downtown Washington location.

Politics played a role in the decision to stay in Washington: the company had been downtown for more than 100 years, and the District of Columbia Public Services Commission made it clear that it wanted Pepco to stay in the city. In the end, employee satisfaction and commitment to the city outweighed the financial advantages of the suburbs. Today, Carter estimates that 85 to 95 percent of employees are happy with the decision. The new headquarters building, opened in September 2001, has excellent access to the Metro transit system, is a striking landmark, and is the first trophy office building in Washington, D.C., designed by an African American architectural firm.

Next, Christopher Zimmerman, chair of the county board of Arlington County, Virginia, and chair of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, provided his perspective on corporate location and smart growth in Arlington County. According to Zimmerman, the county, which is situated between Washington, D.C., and many of its suburbs, is a model for smart growth practices. In the 1960s, the county decided to encourage the location of mass transit in the county, and as a result, today it has 11 Metro stations in two corridors. Planning over the years has focused on promoting dense, mixed-use development around these stations in a bull's-eye pattern. Arlington County, which is the smallest self-governing county in the country at 26 square miles, contains more office space than many U.S. cities—40 million square feet on less than 10 percent of its land area. This pattern of development has bucked the trend of much suburban development in past decades, and the county has reaped multiple benefits, including low vacancy rates and a consistently strong commercial tax base. Today, the county focuses on fine-tuning urban design details, such as how to integrate buildings with their surroundings.

Carolyn Dekle, executive director of the South Florida Regional Planning Council, provided a regional perspective on how to plan for smart growth while attracting businesses. South Florida is challenged by rapid population growth and strains on public facilities such as schools.

Dekle noted that plans to improve the region will require the efforts of the entire regional community, including both the public sector and corporate leaders. She fears that if better growth models are not adopted, the region will see a decline in the quality of life and deterioration of its economic base.

Moderated Group Discussion

Forum participants revisited many of the challenges and opportunities to integrating smart growth and corporate location during a moderated group discussion. The discussion also addressed the name and branding of smart growth itself. Some participants from the development and corporate communities noted that the term "smart growth" has a negative connotation and may have outgrown its usefulness. Tregoning of the Governor's Office of Smart Growth noted that the term "smart growth" is a convenient, shorthand way of talking about efficient use of resources, quality of life, access to amenities, and well-planned development.

Kenneth Rudy of Jones Lang LaSalle suggested that ULI initiate a study to analyze and quantify the benefits of smart growth solutions in order to counter the perception that they are too expensive. Scott Toombs of Merritt Capital Investors also commented that if there were a way to measure the benefits of smart growth, it might be possible to get stakeholders such as owners, tenants, or buyers to accept paying for smart growth in exchange for the value that it creates and the public costs it helps communities avoid.

The topic of competition for human resources as a factor in deciding where to locate a corporation was revisited. Participants noted that this is a cyclical factor and that quality of life becomes more important in recruiting during periods of economic prosperity when there is a shortage of skilled workers. It was generally agreed that communities that wish to maintain a competitive advantage for an extended time must learn how to deal with growth issues such as traffic congestion.

Consideration of possible solutions to traffic congestion led the discussion to the topics of telecommuting and satellite offices. While participants agreed that technology and new ways of working could help alleviate congestion, they identified many issues that still must be overcome. For example, Pearson of Charles Schwab said increased use of telecommuting and satellite offices would mean breaking down the management structure that requires employees engaged in similar or related work to be in physical proximity to one another. He noted that the Schwab office in Pleasanton, California, has become a satellite office that functions without such a formal management structure. Alex Rose of Continental Development Corporation pointed out that telecommuting or satellite offices often are not options for small companies. Lang of Virginia Tech noted that new technologies sometimes do not solve problems, but instead allow communities and companies to delay dealing with the real issues.

Austan Librach, director of the Austin, Texas, Department of Transportation, Planning and Sustainability, explained how Austin provides incentives to tilt the playing field in favor of smart growth solutions. Using a scorecard system, the city provides financial incentives to direct development to desired zones. Under this system, the highest scores create eligibility for incentives capped at the ten-year net present value of the incremental increase in property taxes. Within the cap, there are three basic types of incentives: 1) up to a 100 percent waiver of development fees, 2) utility improvements that have a ten-year break-even payback for the utility, and 3) incentives for capital improvements where the funds are available and are dedicated to improvement categories needed by the development. (See www.ci.austin.tx.us/smartgrowth/matrix.htm for more information.)

Conclusion

Anne Frej, ULI director of office and industrial development, summarized the opportunities and barriers to smart growth solutions in the context of corporate location. The primary factor pushing the players involved in corporate location toward smart growth is the recognition that population growth is inevitable in the United States and that demand for scarce resources, including land, will continue to grow. Other factors that appear to be working in favor of smart growth include the following:

- Growing importance of quality-of-life factors in relocation decisions;
- Employee demands for urban amenities;
- Growth restrictions;
- Environmental concerns;

- Worsening traffic congestion and commute times;
- Imbalance between jobs and housing in many communities;
- Identification of designated growth areas by local and regional agencies; and
- Growing commitment to the urban core.

Barriers to smart growth solutions include:

- NIMBYism that inhibits denser development;
- Single-use zoning;
- Large-scale land and space requirements for new corporate headquarters;
- Global and regional competition leading to inappropriate incentives;
- Households with multiple workplaces and activities;
- Short-term corporate needs that conflict with long-term community goals;
- Lack of vision by the senior corporate managers who strongly influence location decisions; and
- Lack of political will on the part of city and regional officials.

Throughout the day, the forum participants touched on a variety of solutions. The provision of more public transportation options, particularly between suburban work centers, and encouragement of a mix of uses around employment centers were cited as two ways of reducing traffic congestion. It was generally agreed that telecommuting and satellite offices also have the potential to reduce trips to work, but these new ways of working are still in their infancy.

Forum participants stressed the importance of quantifying the benefits of smart growth and educating developers, businesses, and communities about these benefits. The importance of strong regional and local partnerships was also noted. Incentive programs that encourage smart growth solutions have been successful in places such as Austin, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia, and these have the potential to be used effectively in other communities.

Policy Forum Agenda

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2002

6:30 p.m.	**Reception and Dinner**

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2002

8:00 a.m.	**Welcome** Richard M. Rosan, *President, ULI–the Urban Land Institute*
	Forum Overview and Introductions William F. McCall, Jr., *President, McCall & Almy, Forum Chair*
8:30 a.m.	**Emerging Trends in Corporate Location** *The Evolving Geography of Business Location* Robert E. Lang, *Director, Metropolitan Institute, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*
	What are Companies Really Looking For? Daniel Malachuk, *Worldwide Director, Business Location Services, Andersen*
	Current Corporate Location Trends and the Impact of 9/11 Ronald Ruberg, *Partner, Location Advisory Services, Inc.*
	Discussion
10:15 a.m.	**Break**
10:30 a.m.	**What Is Meant by Smart Growth—A Brief Overview** Robert Pinkard, *CEO and Managing Director, Cassidy & Pinkard*
10:45 a.m.	**Corporate Location and Smart Growth in Atlanta** Thomas Weyandt, Jr., *Director, Department of Comprehensive Planning, Atlanta Regional Commission* *Richard Gilbert, Director of Metro Plan, BellSouth Corporation*
	Discussion
Noon	**Lunch**
12:45 p.m.	**Gannett Co./*USA Today* Corporate Relocation** Nancy Houser, *Director, Corporate Administration, Gannett Co., Inc.* Michael Greene, *Principal, Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates*
	Discussion
1:30 p.m.	**Perspectives on Corporate Location Decision Making** Norman Carter, *Manager, Economic Development, Potomac Electric and Power Company* Christopher Zimmerman, *Chair, Arlington County Board* Carolyn Dekle, *Executive Director, South Florida Regional Planning Council*
	Discussion
3:00 p.m.	**Conclusions**
3:30 p.m.	**Adjourn**

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